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Shipyard

A possibility for free play?

A pilot project for constructing an adventure playground

Aalto University
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Työn nimi Shipyard- A possibility for free play, A pilot project for constructing an adventure playground

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Koulutusohjelma Visual Culture and Contemporary Art

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Kieli englanti

Abstract

The frame of the thesis is children's autonomy in a play context, enabling play in form of free play. The thesis contains a written part and a production part.

The written part introduces different forms of play and explains how play exists in life all the way through childhood and adulthood. Its aim is to make us understand how we should hold on to play, because it is the tool for us to learn skills like creativity and problem solving, social interaction, self-knowledge and our relation to the surrounding world. The thesis moves from the act of play to the physical environment of play. It points out how children are evaluated, directed, and protected by adults all the time. There is a silent demand from children's side to enable free play, play without adult interventions and pressure of efficiency.

The thesis opens up a discussion of why our playgrounds are rigid and close-ended instead of something that could support the act of free play, like e.g. adventure playgrounds do.

The production part was carried out in Sweden as a part of pilot project of Fairytales in Craft. The production consisted of building and partly designing an adventurous playground called Shipyard, a place that is a place for active building for children after storytelling. Fairytales in Craft project offers an insight to observe how free play can exist in a constructed environment and in what way we can facilitate free play.

In conclusion the thesis suggests that play should be considered a value in itself, and appreciated in its all forms and in all stages of life. It shouldn't be regarded as an activity that happens in a certain time of our life or in certain places, needing objects designed for it.

Avainsanat children's autonomy, free play, adventure playgrounds

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Tiivistelmä

Opinnäyte keskittyy lasten autonomiaan leikin kontekstissa, leikin mahdollistamiseen vapaan leikin muodossa. Sisältö jakautuu teksti ja tuotanto-osioon.

Tekstiosuudessa esitellään leikin eri muotoja, kuinka leikki ilmenee eri elämänvaiheissa. Se herättelee ymmärtämään, kuinka meidän tulisi pitää kiinni leikeistä tärkeänä oppimisen työkaluna: se ohjaa luovuuteen ja ongelmanratkaisuun, sosiaalisten vuorovaikutustaitojen kehittämiseen, itsetietoisuuteen ja ymmärtämään oman minän suhdetta ympäröivään maailmaan. Teksti liikkuu leikeistä teon tasolla leikin fyysiseen ympäristöön. Se osoittaa, kuinka lapset elävät jatkuvasti aikuisten arvioinnin, ohjauksen ja suojeluksen alaisuudessa. Tekstin läpi kuultaa lasten hiljainen vaatimus vapaaseen leikkiin, leikkiin ilman aikuisten vaikutusta ja ilman painetta tehokkuudesta.

Teksti avaa keskustelua sille, miksi leikkipuistomme ovat loppuun asti suunniteltuja sen sijaan, että ne tarjoaisivat mahdollisuuden vapaaseen, ei-määriteltyyn leikkiin.

Tuotannollinen osuus tapahtui Ruotsissa osana Fairytales in Craft -pilottiprojektia. Tuotannollinen vaihe sisälsi seikkailullisen leikkipuiston, Shipyardin rakentamista ja osittain sen suunnittelua. Fairytales in Craft -projekti tarjosi mahdollisuuden tarkastella, millä tavoin vapaa leikki näkyy ja miten sen voi mahdollistaa rakennetussa ympäristössä.

Lopuksi opinnäyteessä ehdotetaan, että leikkiä tulisi kohdella yhtenä arvoista ja arvostaa kaikkia sen ilmenemismuotoja, kaikkina ikäkausina sen sijaan, että se rajoitetaan vain tiettyyn elämänvaiheeseen, tiettyyn paikkaan, tiettyjen esineiden ja välineiden kanssa.

Avainsanat lasten autonomia, vapaa leikki, seikkailuleikkipuisto

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United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 31:

1 States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

2 States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.



Children depend on adults. They are subjects of direct and indirect manipulation and sculpting by people, society and culture around them. They have a limited amount of freedom to choose how to proceed in their daily activities. Thoughts about an individuals' autonomy and how it changes throughout the human life led me to thinking about children's autonomy in play.

It was spring 2015 when I started to be increasingly interested in playgrounds and play. It raised a lot of questions. Why do playgrounds look like they do? Who uses playgrounds? Who has the ownership of the playground? Are there any other types of playgrounds than the ones I see right now? What does the word play mean? What types of play are there?

With these questions I found myself digging deeper into concepts of adventure playgrounds, the importance of play at all ages and especially into the quality of play.

The production phase of my thesis took place in Dals Långed, Sweden, during summer 2016. As a member of Fairytale in Craft collective I took part to collective's first project Mytheriet. Fairytale in Craft is a concept created by Luka Jelušić and the producers are Luka Jelušić and Annika Wahlström. The first pilot project was called Mytheriet which was an experimental storytelling project based on a story by Björn Fast Nagell and Annika Wahlström. Björn Fast Nagell was also the director of the pilot project.

I had an opportunity to create a play environment for the Mytheriet-project. Building a unique playscape offered me a possibility to observe play and play environment in detail. Figuring out what it could offer children helped me to see the multi-layered features that need to be taken under consideration when creating playscapes.

Play is considered to be the opposite of serious and useful activity. In this thesis I look at play in different contexts and point out its absence in some areas of our lives. I concentrate particularly on free play or open-ended play. Free play and open-ended play are considered to be the closest forms of autonomous play. This thesis examines the importance of acknowledging and respecting the sense of autonomy and self-determination. Through the experience of autonomy a child can have a sense of being a full member of society.

The primary objective in my thesis is to observe the possibilities for free play in a constructed environment. My observations moves in the intersections of phenomenology in psychology, architecture and in philosophy. This is where I place my own artistic practice and in this case the zoomed lens is on autonomy of a child. This texts is not solving any issues relating to my questions and this is not a guide book how to build a perfect learning environment or playscape. For you dear reader this text is an appointment to an optician for an acknowledgement, an opportunity to see the need for child's autonomy in constructed environment and for me this text is a departure point to make a difference.

This text is divided into two parts: theory and production. The focus of the thesis is in theory. Production, however, has an essential role in my own learning process. Without production I would still be having a delusional image of the perfect playground and what it would be like to make one. The production phase gave a lot of relevant information for creating a playground of my own if I choose to do that.

In the theory section I introduce three existing adventure playgrounds. I have chosen these particular playgrounds for their different historical backgrounds and the differences in economical statuses of their locations. One is in Berlin, Germany, one in Wrexham, Wales and the last one in Berkeley Marina, US. With this I try to show how same thing can represent so many different things depending on where the playground is located and how the play is facilitated.

In this thesis I do not intend to criticize education or parenting but to underline the value of play in society and the importance of being aware of our influence on children, how they see themselves now and in the future. How we can support their independence and self-awareness. How learning and playing are not two separate things.

If we lose the ability to play, we also lose the ability to solve social conflicts. Without play and playfulness many things turn into serious matters that are solved in a very self-centered way. Ultimately play helps you “to pull your head out of your ass”.

I was born in 1976 in an urban area of Koivukylä in Vantaa. Families moved there from rural areas. Schools were new and filled with hundreds of kids with similar backgrounds. The area was full of spaces for adventure play. My days were filled with outdoor play with plenty of playmates to choose from. The play started as soon as school ended and lasted till sundown. There was no adult supervision and no one told us what to do. When we did stupid things or made a mess we were corrected but otherwise adults left us alone. Retrospectively thinking many things were quite risky but we learned to navigate in hazardous and even dangerous environments. We learned independency and risk assessment.

Not until now, due to my thesis work, I have realized that those adults gave me the most precious gift. With no rules or conditions, I was extremely free to play. Even later in life, I still have a strong drive to play. I never stopped playing or being excited about this world. My dearest wish is that every child could have the same opportunities than I did.



What is the use and meaning of play in contemporary world?
What useful skills and qualities free play encourages and enhances?
Does free play exist in constructed environments?
Why do we build playgrounds?

1.



1.1



The origin of the word play is in old English: pleg(i)an 'to exercise', plega 'brisk movement', related to Middle Dutch pleien 'leap for joy, dance'.

According to the Oxford dictionary the first five definitions for the word play are:

1 Engage in activity for enjoyment and recreation rather than a serious or practical purpose. Engage in without proper seriousness or understanding

2 Take part in (a sport)

3 Be cooperative

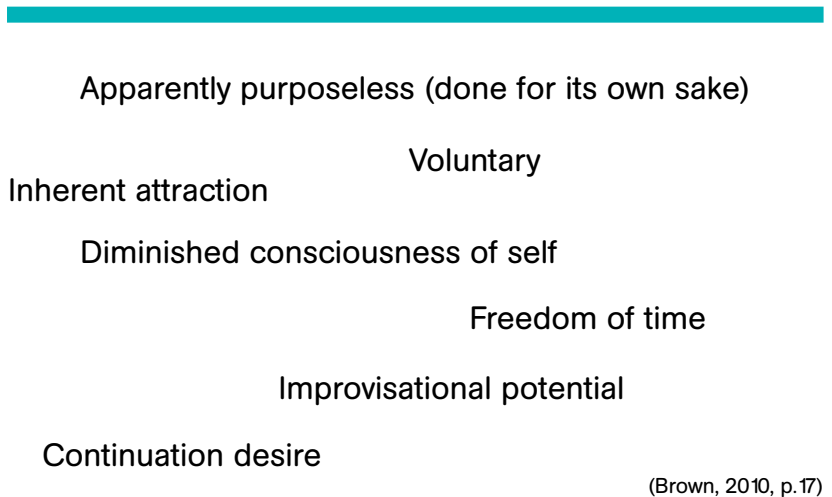
4 Represent (a character) in a theatrical performance or a film

5 Perform on (a musical instrument)

Play is a very personal experience. It can vary from digging holes and collecting worms to various kind of games. Play is visual, auditive, performative, tactile, constructive, creative. Play is everything from imagining to sticks and stones to Pokémon Go.

“Play is serious, yet not serious; trivial yet profound; imaginative and spontaneous, yet bound by rules and anchored in the real world. It is childish, yet underlies many of the greatest accomplishments of adults.” (Gray, 2013, p.139)

Play researcher Stuart Brown (2010, p.15-16) defines play as primal activity and that is both preconscious and preverbal. Defining play with words doesn't give justice to it because it is valued the most when it is experienced but order to make it verbal he listed properties of play in a following way:



Similarly psychologist Peter Gray defines play: 1. Play is self-chosen and self-directed; 2. Play is activity in which means are more valued than ends; 3. Play has structure, or rules, which are not dictated by physical necessity but emanate from the minds of the players; 4. Play is imaginative, non-literal, mentally removed in some way from “real” or “serious” life; and 5. Play involves an active, alert, but non-stressed frame of mind. (Gray, 2013, p.140)

What on the other hand doesn't count as activity of play is activity where all the participants don't agree to take part in the activity, like bullying or abusing of any kind, even when one or some of the participants say statements like: “It was only a play”, “We were just joking” or “It was just goofing around”. Sadism or cruelty in ways of controlling another is not play. The sensation of the play needs to be equally experienced by all of the participants.

In a book of Evolutionary playwork and reflective analytic practice Hughes (2001) describes fifteen different and essential play types:

- symbolic play
- rough and tumble play
- socio- dramatic play
- social play
- creative play
- communication play
- exploratory play
- fantasy play
- imaginative play
- locomotor play
- mastery play
- object play
- role play
- deep play
- dramatic play

Play is not only physical activity it is also a mental attitude and that is the reason that not all play appears to be playful because play does not requires smile when it brings joy. Play is not necessarily all or none. Play blends with other things in life with various proportions. (Gray, 2013).

Play can be many things and we can consider that games are a form of play too: competitive sports, board games, video games and gambling. In addition to all the fun features that games possess they also hold very complex features like addictiveness, possible anti-social elements and a lot argued video game violence's impact to psyche.

The nature of competitive sports is to find a winner and ultimately a loser as well. The psychological impacts of this dichotomy are very controversial. Oftentimes competitiveness makes people self-critical, perfectionist and too preoccupied with the outcome rather than the activity. Those kind of emotions don't allow the feelings of playfulness or out-of-time and doing-it-for-its-own-sake sensations (Brown, 2010, p.59). Because of the width and emotional complexity of the subject of games I am excluding all kind of gameplay from my thesis. The focus is in play that happens in the physical world and in activities where the importance of the activity is in the activity itself and not in the final result.

Even though all kinds of play are important and they bring elements of joy there is a huge importance in the quality of play.

In 1985 Bob Hughes constructed a statement (The Ten Newcastle points) with a group of experienced playworkers. The conclusion was that the quality play experiences are important because they help children to:

1. think for themselves
2. make their own decisions
3. have confidence in their own abilities
4. develop empathy
5. develop personal values
6. test out strategies without stigma or failure
7. resolve contradictions and inconsistencies
8. communicate their needs, beliefs and desires more clearly
9. have an understanding of the life process
10. develop an understanding of the interrelationship of everything question everything. (Hughes, 2012)

In the quality of play the main point is the authenticity. The play has to come from deep down inside us and from the player's own motivation. This kind of play expresses the needs and desires of the player. (Brown, 2010)

1.2



The latin word *ludens* is derived from the word *ludus*. *Ludus* means play, sport, game, entertainment and (interestingly) also school. The Latin word *faber* means craftsman or artisan. When combined with *Homo*, human, the first is Playful human and the latter Working human or Human the maker.

Homo Ludens – the playful human is a book written by a Dutch cultural theorist Johan Huizinga (1938). In the book Huizinga writes about the necessity of play and its primal nature in the creation of culture and society. The book doesn't give very current information about play but it is an interesting book written in an exceptional time. In that year Hitler marched to Austria and claimed it for Germany. It was the year of the Kristallnacht, and Nazis sent 20 000-30 000 Jews to concentration camps. With those events in mind I find it interesting that Huizinga felt the need to write about play and its necessity in human life.

“Stop playing and get back to work” or “You can play but you must finish your homework first”. These are two examples of how we adults place these two activities, play and work, on opposite sides. It seems strange that nowadays we put so much importance on work even when it feels unpleasant and compulsory. In the book *Organization in play* it is explained how work and pleasure have shifted to opposite sides: “The shift from a pre-industrial to an industrial mode of organizing marks an important point of inflection in changing attitudes to work. Even though hunter-gatherer societies apparently had more leisure time than more economically ‘advanced’ agricultural societies (Sahlins, 1974), the reality for most people in pre-industrial

societies was that hard work was a necessity just to live. If work was good (because it was necessary) then not working must be bad.” (Kavanagh et al., 2011, p. 10)

After the Protestant Reformation 1517–1648 work was valued even more. Working was a virtue, not because it lifted your social status and brought material good in an individual’s life but also because a working person was predestined to be saved by God. (Kavanagh et al., 2011) This virtue of working has created an illusion that the main goal and purpose of life is work and when we work hard there is no room for anything else, such as play. Play and playfulness are the catalysts to all things in life. This applies to work too. Play brings progress and new ways of thinking and experiencing the world. “Opposite of play is not work, it’s depression.” (Brown, 2010, p. 126)

There are examples of how play has been used in bettering the economic status of an area and the people who live in it. Playground Ideas is one of the organizations that works for achieving that goal. Playground Ideas is a non-profit organization in Australia that “supports anyone, anywhere to build a stimulating space for play using only local materials, tools, and skills”. The Case for Play is a project organized by the Playground Ideas. The project report compiles the best research on play, spanning the fields of economics, psychology, child development, education and neuroscience. They have put together the result of long term studies which have shown that access to early play experiences boosts life outcomes substantially: 42% raise in yearly earnings, 44% increase in high school graduations and 17% increase in bachelor degrees. Perhaps most importantly, play builds the critical skill of self-regulation, which underpins success for a lifetime. (Kellock, 2015)

“Human existence, because it came into being through asking questions, is the root of change in the world. There is a radical element to existence, which is the radical act of asking questions... At root human existence involves surprise, questioning and risk. And because of all this, it involves actions and change.”
- Paulo Freire -

The Case for Play seems to be a very logical way to empower children to become full members of society. What I find hard to accept is the way how we see learning as a task which has a beginning and an end. In many parts of the world we have an educational system that enables equality in the learning process. This system materializes in schools. There are traditionally teachers and pupils or professors and students. In developing this institution it was forgotten that learning is a never ending process. The joy of learning is lost in the classical school room, in schedules, in rules, in scheme classifications and in examinations. (Dewey, 1938, p. 18)

**"We don't need no education
We don't need no thought control
No dark sarcasm in the classroom
Teachers leave them kids alone..."
- Pink Floyd -**

The beauty of equal opportunities for learning in Finland is a right provided by law but it is also a responsibility – it is compulsory. Generally, the right and responsibility on carried through ages from 7 to 17. (Opetushallitus 2014) I won't go into detail analyzing the classical system or comparing it with Montessori, Waldorf, or Steiner pedagogy. It is likely that all these different approaches have both good and questionable qualities. It is not my intention to criticize the teachers who are doing their best under the circumstances. My intention is to point out the fact that learning is an essential part of growing up and that school is not the only place where learning occurs. Also I wish to stress how children are non-autonomous participators in our educational system.

People learn all the time, with or without schools. The school system aims to produce well behaved citizens for our society. The goal is to support the students' growth as human beings and members of society as well as to teach necessary knowledge and skills. (Opetushallitus, 2014). This matter has not changed much within the last five hundred years.

Mostly changes in the curricula are made under economic pressure from the government. The latest example is very recent. One of the changes was for The Finnish National Board of Education to include computer programming

into the curriculum. (OPH, 2016) The following clause is from the Teaching programming guidebook for teachers: "Suomi ei pärjää, jos emme skarp-paa. Ohjelmoinnin opettaminen lapsille ja nuorille on välttämätöntä myös Suomen tulevaisuuden ja kilpailukyvyn kannalta." (trans. Finland cannot cope if we don't shape up. The purpose of teaching programming to children and to youth is necessary also because of the future and competitiveness.)

Not taking sides whether it is good or bad to teach programming, this example is evidence that our educational system is working for governmental purposes. Efficiency is a motive to hold on to this ancient system where an individual's needs are facilitated to serve the needs of the majority.

Many times schools offer arbitrary information that obviously serves the society but stays far from learners reality. Dewey says in his book *Experience & Education* (1938): "But the gulf between the mature or adult products and the experience abilities of the young is so wide that the very situation forbids much active participation by pupils in the development of what is taught." He continues: "Learning here means acquisition of what already is incorporated in books and in the heads of the elders." (Dewey, 1938, p.19)

In TED-talk *The nerd's guide to learning everything online* (2012), cartographer John Green describes his learning experiences in school in contrast with learning elsewhere. He starts by telling that he thinks that he was a terrible student. The reason was that he felt that was because the things taught in school were totally arbitrary for him he just could not care less about the things that were taught. He explains: "They were just series of hurdles that were erected before me and that I had to jump over in order to achieve adulthood. I did not really want to jump over these hurdles because they seemed completely arbitrary, so I often wouldn't. And then people would threatened me with 'This is going on my personal record' or 'You never get a good job'." He goes on telling how he really did not want to get a good job. At the time he was twelve years old and for him a good job meant waking up early and wearing a tie. He didn't see happiness at the end of that road and thus didn't see the point in following it. Later in life he went to a boarding school where he was surrounded by a community of learners and with that community he also found his own way of learning. Learning became enjoyable and a continuous process after he could see the interlinkages between different pieces of information. What he also points out in his talk is the importance of the learning community. Without the community learning becomes boring and laborious.

Peter Gray explains: "Play serves the serious purpose of education, but the player is not deliberately educating him or herself. The player is playing for fun; education is a by-product. If the player were playing for serious purpose, it would no longer be play and much of the educative power would be lost." (Gray, 2013, p. 154)

My thought here is that it is possible to create a learning environment where learning is a byproduct. Where the driving force is the desire to learn. Then school would not be a big task that you need to finish on your journey to adulthood. This thought can in part be found in the new curricula of Finnish basic education: "The teacher's task is to instruct and guide the pupils into becoming lifelong learners, by taking the individual learning approaches of each pupil into consideration" and "One particular aim of the reform was to develop the learning environments and work methods used in basic education. A learning environment should be secure, and it should inspire learning". (Opetushallitus, 2014) I would truly love to see this happen with addition of play. Another interesting continuum for this is a Playful Learning Centre running under University of Helsinki. Playful Learning Centre is living lab where researchers, educators, teacher education professionals and businesses come across. (Playful Learning Centre, 2016) Interesting but commercial hub that collaborates also with game creators. I do hope that this way play will be more accessible for everyone and not only a tool for commercial use.

School as it is, is strenuous for growing individuals, both socially and cognitively. Play is a good aid for developing both skills. Play activates and creates new neural connections. Play activity sculpts the brain. It helps to create connections between arbitrary information and reality. We can make cognitive connections that find their way into our daily lives. (Brown, 2010, p. 34)

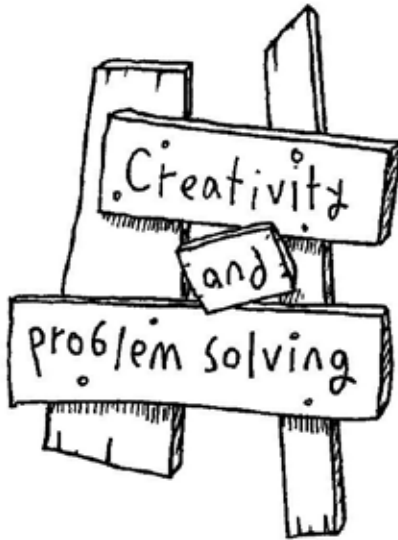
Another implementation of play could be used in creating after school breathing places, playspaces where children can let the steam out. One good example is The Land, a playground in Wales (more in chapter: The Land). Claire Griffiths, from the Association of voluntary organizations in Wrexham, at BBC-news interview: "I think that lot of playful behaviour can sometimes be perceived as antisocial behavior and Land does provide a space where children can create and can destroy. If they had a really bad day (at school) they can come here and they can let it out." (Richards, 2013)

Children have very limited opportunities to influence the things they learn in school, how things are taught and by whom. Also the physical surround-

ings are limited. Children don't have any power whatsoever to influence the infrastructure of their learning environment, inside the classroom or not even to things out on a schoolyard. I think we all can agree, that the child's autonomy is very limited or non-existing regarding to our educational system. This acknowledgment should be taken into consideration when creating learning environments for children. One option to the current school system is also to decrease amount of hours children spend in school then there automatically would be time for non-organized activities.

“Children do not need more schooling. They need less schooling and more freedom. They also need safe enough environments in which to play and explore, and they need free access to the tools, ideas, and people (including playmates) that can help them along their own chosen paths.” (Gray, 2013, p. 20)

1.3



Creativity is a hard matter to define. It is not a rare gift that only artists and designers have. Creativity and problem solving abilities can be learnt and improved. Creativity walks hand in hand with passion, with the drive that gets a person excited. I have met several people that I consider to be very creative although their expertise has nothing to do with art or craft. I consider them to be very passionate about the thing they are doing. Because they are experts and they have the inner drive they are the ones to make the best and the most creative solutions in their work.

Gray (2013, p. 136–137) introduces several examples where a playful mood improves creativity and insightful problem solving. One example describes a Duncan's candle problem from the 1940's. The test is about a problem solving task where participants (group of college students) are given a small candle, matches and other artifacts and with those tools they need to solve a problem. Before being presented the candle problem, participants are divided in three groups. First group watched a five-minute clip from a slapstick comedy, the second group saw a five-minute serious film about mathematics, and a third group saw no film. The results were dramatic. From the first group 75% solved the problem. The second group's result was 20% and the third's 13%.

Solving problems requires a creative leap, a leap that allows the person to see the problem from a new angle. Play and playfulness enables the leap.

“Yet, because play is not a response to external demands or immediate biological needs, the person at play is relatively free from the strong drives and emotions that are experienced as pressure. And because the player's attention is focused on process more than the outcome, and because the realm of play is removed from the serious world where consequences matter, the player's mind is not distracted by fear or failure.” (Gray, 2013, p.152)

Working with your hands and creating your own play objects accelerates imagination and develops problem solving abilities. Stuart Brown (2010, p. 9-10) gives an example. Cal Tech's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) is famous for creating space devices for NASA (The National Aeronautics and Space Administration). This is the laboratory which made the dreamy leaps toward space possible. In the late 90's they ran into a problem. The engineers and scientist who came aboard in the 60's and put men on the moon were retiring in large numbers. JPL was facing a new kind of challenge. Even the top graduates from MIT (The Massachusetts Institute of Technology) and Stanford were missing something. They had trouble solving certain kinds of problems, very important problems.

The managers at JPL noticed this dilemma. The newcomers were very good at solving theoretical and mathematical problems, but they had very little knowledge of solving practical difficulties, taking the theory into practice. After interviewing newcomers and old employees they discovered something. All of the old employees had, when they were young, took apart clocks to see how they worked, or built soapbox derby racers and all sorts of appliances. The younger generation had not worked with their hands and had the most difficulties in solving problems.

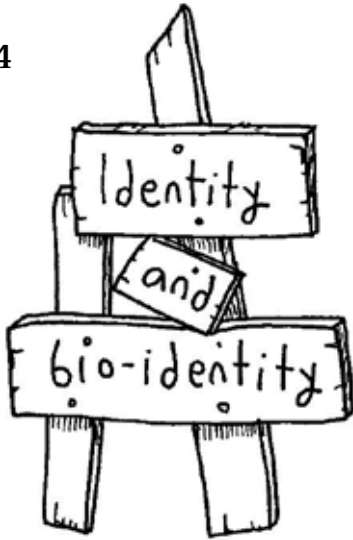
The case above is just one example of how the commercial world has already realized how useful and beneficial play and playfulness are. Tim Brown, the designer and CEO of the IDEO design company, tells in his TED-talk at the Serious Play Conference how his company uses play in their creative process. "...there are series of behaviors that we have learned as kids have turn out quite useful for us as designers. They include: exploration, go for quantity; building, think with your hands and role play, act it out." (Brown, 2008)

Play does not only give personal satisfaction and make people around us happier, it also actually makes us more independent and ready for everyday tasks and pushes the limits of our abilities in problem solving.

"Not having heard something is not as good
as having heard it;
having heard it is not as good as having seen it;
having seen it is not as good as knowing it;
knowing it is not as good as putting it into practice."

- Xun Kuang -

1.4



"Identity is derived from at least two quite separate questions. Who am I? Who I want to be? A good play environment can give children objective feedback on the first and facilitate decisions about the second." (Hughes, 2012, p.121)

Child psychologist Bruno Bettelheim writes in his book *The Uses of Enchantment* (1977, p. 94): "Since ancient times the near impenetrable forest in which we get lost has symbolized the dark, hidden, near-impenetrable world of our unconscious. If we have lost the framework which gave structure to our past life and must now find our way to become ourselves, and have

entered this wilderness with an as yet undeveloped personality, when we succeed in finding our way out we shall emerge with a much more highly developed humanity."

Following this Bettelheim also writes that in folk tales forests are used as a metaphor for the perilous unconscious mind. Being lost in a great forest is an ancient symbol for the need to find oneself.

Very early we start building our consciousness and identity. We get bits and pieces from the society and the people around us. Hughes (2012) reminds that children are not born racist, sexist or homophobic. They learn those attitudes from other people like their parents, family or community.

How children learn? They learn many things from just a gaze, from a tiny anxious squeeze of the hand, the raise of an eyebrow. "The real building blocks, as with everything in childhood, are much more subtle." (Hughes, 2012, p. 122) Children, especially young children, are sensitive to tiny nuances in communication: how words are pronounced or emphasized. It is a natural way to sense change and danger, ultimately it is a surviving mechanism.

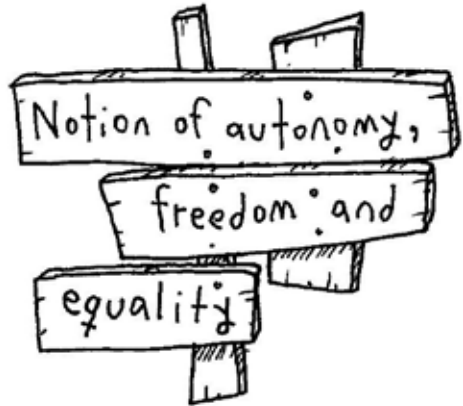
Many children are afraid to be who they are because of the preconceptions of others. The job of play workers and adults in general is to identify that

and support child's work in progress in development of their identity. Practicing play is crucial for the development of our identity. Play is both acute practicing and exercising pre-learned ways to function in our world. A less recognized phase in the development of a child's identity is a phase where the child develops a relationship with the earth, a bio-identity. When we can't develop our bio-identity and if our relationship with the planet and other species that live here becomes imbalanced, then we become less grounded in the reality of our biology and more dependent on artificial constructs of identity, "constructs that diminish our humanness and our emotional foundations and make us dissatisfied and unhappy." (Hughes, 2012, p. 186-187)

Bob Hughes (2001, p. 14) mentions psychologists Stanley Hall and Ken Wilber in his book. They suggest that play enables a re-enactment of various stages in the human evolution and the evolution of consciousness. Playing with fire and digging dens are ways to re-forge the fractured links in the relationship with Mother Earth.

1.5

Matters of autonomy are extremely complex. Here in the following is one example where children's self-governance exists. All over the world there are similar examples in the behavior of other native tribes where children are considered to be full members of the society.



Autonomy equals personal freedom and self-government. Autonomous people aren't controlled by other people or external forces. Gray (2013) writes about a research on hunter-gatherers and how the core of their social values is autonomy, sharing and equality. He reminds that in our modern democratic culture we hold the same values, but the importance of autonomy for hunter-gatherers is so strong that they refrain from telling one another what to do. They don't even give advice if it's not asked of them because they

want to avoid interfering with one another's freedom. Each person, including children, are free to make their own choices, as long as those choices don't interfere with others freedom.

Anthropologists say that their sense of equality goes beyond our modern way of thinking of equal opportunities. For them equality means that everybody's needs are equally important, nobody is considered to be superior and nobody has the right to dominate. In my opinion, children raised this way would feel that they are free and equal members of society and that their opinion matters.

"Creating a context where children readily accept and follow rules, games contribute to children's self-regulation i.e. autonomy. They are the type of activity that enables children to develop their inner moral beliefs." (Boisvert, 1998, p. 59)

1.6



"Free play is unstructured, voluntary, child-initiated activity that allows children to develop their imaginations while exploring and experiencing the world around them. It is the spontaneous play that comes naturally from children's natural curiosity, love of discovery, and enthusiasm." (Play&Playground, 2016)

Free play is in some cases also called self-initiated play. In self-initiated play child forms an image of reality. Even when children mimic reality they are not copying life, they are interpreting

it. Child has to ascertain what kind of relationships there can be and how they relate to work or hobbies. During play children analyze reality through their imagination. (Vähänen, 2004, p.41)

Free play is not age specific. In groups of children of different ages younger children learn skills from the older ones and older ones learn caretaking

and leadership skills (Gray, 2013). One prime characteristics of play is the will and desire to play. If there is differences levels of skills or strengths the stronger or skilled one will automatically “self-handicap” in order to level the play experience, because the main purpose is to continue the activity. (Brown, 2010)

“When kids walk through the gates (Berkeley Adventure playground), and they say what can we do in here? And we say, whatever you’d like, their eyes just light up, and they get very excited because there’s a sense of freedom, walking into a space with so much potential.” (Wiederholt, 2006)

Adults need to be aware of how easily their choices can manipulate children. Even outside of school children are directed, protected, ranked, judged, criticized, praised, and rewarded by adults. That’s why it is important to offer time and space for free play so that the child’s own perception of the world can develop. (Gray, 2013)

It seems logical to prepare children for the future by organizing all their time and take them from an adult directed activity to another. But actually we might be taking time from what they need to discover their talents and capabilities for themselves. With ferrying children from activity to another we might be depriving the access to their inner motivation that could be their driving force through life. (Brown, 2010)

“When a child chooses the content and direction of an activity, it’s likely that eventually something about it will make adults cringe. Committing to support child-directed play means relinquishing control and managing your own feelings of discomfort. At its core this is an act of deep respect for the child and their experience.”

- E. Davis -

One form of free play is open-ended play. “Open-ended play allows children to express themselves in play freely and creatively, not bound by preset limitations. There are no rules to follow, no expectations, no specific problems to solve, and no pressure to produce a finished product when engaging freely in open-ended play. In contrast, closed-ended activities have a determined outcome, a right answer, and a restriction on individual differences.

Examples of closed-ended materials would be single-use toys like puzzles.” (Play & Playground, 2016)

There are more and more understanding that goal-orientated and organized play takes away the open-endedness of play. When play is fixed and play objects very systematically and rigidly designed to be use in a certain way, it strips away the imaginative continuum of play. The ideology of Loose parts suits well in the concept of open-ended play. In the material repertoire are water, dirt, sand, sticks, leaves, rocks, and whatever children find from the environment that is loose. (Play & Playground, 2016) One good example of that in the urban environment is the adventure playground The Land. It is also called a junk playground, a playground with numerous utensils for play. (Playground Adventure UK, 2012)

In open-ended play children build huts and other imaginative constructions. Things are seldom in a straight line or leveled. Buildings are more like never ending organisms. At times adults have a very strong drive to correct or fix children’s play environment. They decorate, clean, and straighten things. It can also be done verbally “It’s not supposed to be like that”, “ Why you are doing it that way?” or “You are not really doing it properly”. Questioning and correcting play takes away the enjoyment of it.

At times open-ended play does not suit the aesthetics of adults. Huts built in a cityscape might be taken down by the park workers if nearby resident make complaints about the matter. (Huilaja, 2016). For adults it could be good at some point to stop and think about what is actually proper or wrong. How relevant it is to intervene with child’s play.

1.7



“Better a broken bone
than a broken spirit.”

- Lady Alen Hurtwood -

Taking risks is an essential part of growing up: jumping down from the couch, riding a bike or climbing a tree. With trying and exploring the world children learn to assess risks. Through exploration and attempts they learn to evaluate what they can and cannot do. Autonomous play always includes taking risks and learning risk assessment. If a child is overprotected and not able to practice this mechanism the world becomes very dangerous place, and not only to operate physically but also psychologically. (Hughes, 2001)

Laura Whittaker, owner and teacher of the Wind Ridge Schoolhouse on Observation, a Nature-based preschools in Duluth, says: “Kids aren’t spending enough time outside, developing independently. This is a direct response to try to meet those needs (building resilience, stamina and creativity, self-regulation and social skills and emotional stability and good health). To offer them a childhood, and delay that academic intensity.” It’s a risk emotionally and physically to try something new, like climbing a tree. Socially, the risk comes from engaging other kids in imaginative play, she says. And kids learn from their successes and failures in these areas, which may be one of the most important things children learn from nature play. (Hollingsworth, 2016).

Adults are taking too much role in risk assessment. This phenomenon is called helicopter parenting. Risks are evaluated by somebody else than children. Bob Hughes explains: “In reality they (activities) cannot be both safe and risky. If risk is to be real and not an illusion, it has to have a real element of potential physical harm attached to it. That means if the child does not concentrate or if the activity overstretches his or hers abilities, someone could get hurt; this is essential knowledge for life.” (Hughes, 2001, p. 9)

Great health and safety myths



The myth Health and safety rules take the adventure out of playgrounds

The reality We're all for playgrounds being exciting and challenging places. Children should have fun in them, get fit, develop social skills and learn how to handle risks.

What's important is to strike the right balance – protecting children from harm while allowing them the freedom to develop independence and risk awareness. Exciting and challenging playgrounds do this, poorly maintained or badly designed ones don't.

Health and safety laws don't stop children having fun but ill-considered and overprotective actions do.



Go to www.hse.gov.uk/myth/index.htm to find out more

No 24 March 2009

- ◀ The Health and Safety Executive is an independent regulator for work-related health, safety and illness in Great Britain. One of its missions is to bust health and safety myths.
www.hse.gov.uk

Many play environments don't offer any challenges to children. Adults fear exposing their children to risks and to possible pain. When clearing all risks they prevent children from learning from the pain and realizing their evolutionary need for that. Risk is something that children face in some point in their lives. The sooner they learn that, the sooner the world turns less dangerous. Sometimes a broken arm now can save one's life later.

"Striking the right balance between protecting children from the most serious risks and allowing them to reap the benefits of play is not about eliminating risk. Nor is it about complicated methods of calculating risks or benefits. In essence, play is a safe and beneficial activity. Sensible adult judgments are all that is generally required to derive the best benefits to children whilst ensuring that they are not exposed to unnecessary risk." (Ball et al., 2013, p.8)

Bob Hughes differentiates risk and danger. "Risk is something children recognize. They are aware or conscious of it. It is something they know they are entering into, like consciously climbing higher, swinging faster or balancing more precariously. Danger, on the other hand, is unassessable to a child." (2001, p. 9) Dangers are things like poison, pollution and broken electricity cables.

In the Astrid Lindgren's book *Ronia the Robber's Daughter*, Ronia is advised by her father how not fall into the chasm. The advice was that she should jump over the chasm. Jumping was the way to avoid falling in - not avoiding the chasm all together. That is how we learn, by doing. By trying, failing and trying again.

1.8



"Ability to play is critical not only being happy, but also to sustain social relationships and being creative, innovative person." (Brown, 2010, p. 6)

Humans play all a time. Almost all of our social interaction includes play. Flirting, daydreaming, joking are play for adults. When we are children we don't need any instructions how to play. It happens so naturally through enjoyment and we learn the rules from our playmates along the way. But why is play so different for adults and children? Stuart Brown (2010, p. 6-7) presents a thought: when we grow older play becomes something that we are ashamed of, something that it is not a part of an adult's life. The older we get more the more guilty we feel when playing. Play is not considered to be productive but a waste of time. If the activity does not teach us a skill, make us money or is not productive we as adult should not be doing it. Play needs to be integrated into sports or other competitive activity before it is acceptable.

When we grow up our responsibilities regarding many things increase and we also start to worry how we appear in the eyes of others.

"In adults, playfulness most often blends with other attitudes and motives having to do with adult responsibilities." (Gray, 2013)

Bob Hughes (2001) writes about de-skilling in his book. De-skilling is about facilitating child's play on the child's own skill level and not about demonstrating adults own level of knowledge, skill and expertise. In practice it means that the adult asks a child to do something and after does it better

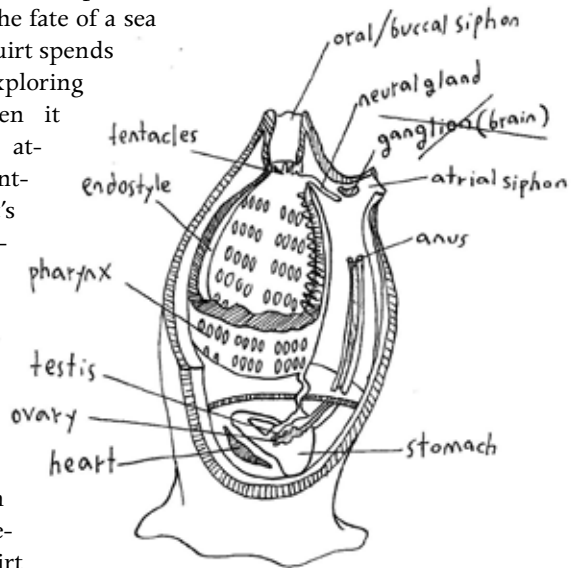
themselves. This type of behavior tells a child that his/hers action was not good enough.

Often when children are playing they seek away from the adults gaze. Few explanations for that are that adults have a tendency to forbid the play, hand out advice or in the worst case they do the activity for the children. Basically they control the play. But children don't need advice when it comes to play. It is playing and children know how to do it and invent new ways as they go about it. (Hughes, 2001).

Most likely things mentioned above are not done with bad intention. Time constraints make us do things for children, forbidding and controlling comes from tiredness and thoughts how we would like our living environment to look, sound or feel like.

Essentially enabling play for children boils down to us finding the play in ourselves. Brown (2010, p. 80) gives a nice example: when pressure drops in an aeroplane, adults should put on their own oxygen mask before helping children. Similarly it works that way with play as well. We as adults need to recover and retrace our own play memories before directing our children.

Brown also writes about an unexpected consequence of not playing: the fate of a sea squirt. A juvenile sea squirt spends its time growing and exploring his surroundings. When it moves to adulthood, it attaches itself permanently to a rock or a boat's hull. After the anchoring there is no need for monitoring the world. The passing current provides nutrition. The sea squirt turns into a passive couch potato. Because it does not explore anymore its brain becomes more or less useless – and so the sea squirt digests it.



The human brain is not like sea squirt's, our brain keeps on developing. But: "If we stop playing, we share the fate of all animals that grow out of play. Our behavior becomes fixed. We are not interested in new and different things. We find fewer opportunities to take pleasure in world around us." (Brown, 2010, p.71) Humans are designed to be lifelong explorers and players.

So what happens if we stop playing?

"Our work or other responsibilities often demand we set play aside. But when play is denied over the long term, our mood darkens. We lose our sense of optimism and we become unhedonic, or incapable of feeling sustained pleasure." (Brown, 2010, p.43)

In his TED talk (2014), psychologist Peter Gray brings to our attention studies and standardized clinical asset questionnaires made in the US that have followed the mental health of children and young adults and their thoughts on having control over their lives. He explains how the change is seen in correlation to the decline of play.

Following the decline of play, five to ten times more children today suffer from major depression or from clinically significant anxiety disorder than in the 1950's. Over the same period of time the suicide rate has doubled among young people aged 15 to 24. Age 15 and under the suicide rates has been quadrupled. Gray continues with a questionnaire made by psychologist Julian Rotter in the late 1950's, Internal-External Locus Control Scale. Internal means that life is controlled by the person and External that the control is somewhere else. There has been a steady decline in the sense that children and young adult have control over their own lives. They feel more and more that their lives are controlled by faith, by circumstances, by other people's decisions. Gray brings more bad news by telling how since 1980 there has been a rise in narcissism, a decline in empathy and most recently a gradual decline in creative thinking among school children of all ages.

The figures and Gray's conclusions are based on American questionnaires. A direct correlation with these findings can be hard to find in Finland due to the differences in economic situation, public healthcare and educational systems. Also, there is very little research on the topic in Finland and the findings vary. (Santalahti and Sourander, 2008).

In Finland we have acknowledged children's need for physical activity (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö 2016). The outdoor activities at school for ex-

ample are not extremely organized. In a school in Atlanta for example they turned free play recess to an intent on improving academic performance or in Philadelphia where children are required to take part in structured, monitored activities (Johnson 1998). We can end up like that too if we don't choose to change our course. Play is more and more organized in Finland too. Either it is directed by an instructor or a coach or children play in environments designed by adults.

A three-year (2014–2016) project funded by the Finnish Cultural Foundations project Koko Suomi Leikkii has brought some hope. Project is organized by Finnish Red Cross and Mannerheim League for Child Welfare, it supports and encourages the act of play for all ages in Finland. (kokosuomi-leikkii.fi)

2.



Encyclopedia Britannica defines a playground:
“Playground, controlled setting for children’s play. This institutionalized environment consists of a planned, enclosed space with play equipment that encourages children’s motor development.”

“We are afraid of play, precisely because play is hard to control, and the same can be said about playgrounds with less regulation, more freedom, loose parts and room for appropriation.” (Pousen, 2016)

The history of playgrounds in Finland stretches as far as hundred years back. In 2014 the city of Helsinki celebrated the 100th anniversary of its playgrounds. A newspaper article from the occasion tells that in the beginning there were no playground equipment – only lot of open space and some sand. There were playground supervisors but only one playground worker per 50–100 children. Children could play freely in the designated area. In those days it was usual for children to play by themselves with minimal adult interference or supervision. Old users of those playgrounds remember that the difference between those times and today is that back then children went to the playground alone or with their siblings and now children go with their parents (Helsingin Sanomat, 2014). Even when the playground was only a piece of land and a pile of sand it was an established and defined space, a location where there is space for play.

Often in a cityscape the only established space for play is a playground. If the playground is located on city grounds, it is owned by the city. Usually playgrounds are designed by architects for a certain age group and they contain different kinds of certified play equipment, such as a slide, a jungle gym, a swing and a sandbox. In bigger playgrounds there might also be equipment like bars for chin-ups, a see-saw, a merry-go-around and a football field. The place exists before the play activity has even started.

Very typical approach to building a playground is defining the users by age. The usual age groups are toddlers from 6 months to 2 years, children from 2 to 5 years and from 6 to 10 years. It seems that children aged 10 and older are no longer taken into consideration when designing playgrounds.

Playspace in contrast to a playground in a non-established area. It can vary from a physical space to a mental state of mind. It is established only in the minds of those who use it. In some playful activities the physical playspace shifts and expands with the activity, i.e. in parkour.

In the UK the Forestry Commission has produced downloadable guidance material to help city planners design playspaces in natural environments. The guide book is an interesting initiative to expand playgrounds into unlimited areas. This type of city planning could offer children alternative places for play.

Even when we cannot create completely autonomous playspaces we can try to get as close as possible by offering more open-ended play equipment in non-directed spaces, places where children have the liberty to choose and create their play environment and have ownership over it. Maybe the main question is that how much, or to be precise, how little we should intervene and direct the play with our playground designs.

2.1



“No sense of ownership over a space; there’s no sense of independence and self-confidence that comes from playing on their own.”

- Eve Mosher -
(about playgrounds in NYC)

The Oxford dictionary defines the word adventure playground: “A playground containing objects or structures such as ropes, slides, and tunnels, for children to play on or in.”

Separation of the words leads us closer to the essence of this type of playground. Adventure is:

“A Noun

1 An unusual and exciting or daring experience

1.1 [mass noun] Excitement associated with danger or the taking of risks

1.2 A reckless or potentially hazardous action or enterprise

Word’s Origin:

Middle English: from Old French aventure (noun), aventurer (verb), based on Latin *adventurus* ‘about to happen’, from *advenire* ‘arrive’.”

A Verb

1 Engage in daring or risky activity

Technically an adventure playground contains mainly the same elements as an ordinary playground but in reality at the adventure playground the play elements are not built by a commercial company. The play environment is usually built by or with children and children have the possibility to change it and interact with it.

Adventure playgrounds are originally called junk-playgrounds or in Danish skrammellegepladsen. The founder of this kind of playgrounds is a Danish landscape architect Carl Theodor Sørensen (1898–1979). He was dissatisfied with the existing playgrounds because he saw that children were not interested in playing in them. Children rather played in empty lots and building sites and later on during and after the World war II at bomb sites. Playing was about constructing and demolishing without adult supervision.

Skrammellegepladsen was a place where children could build their own play environment from boxes, old cars, timber and other discarded mate-

rials. The first playground of this sort was built in Emdrup, Copenhagen in August 1943. Nothing was static or expensive – it was all wood, rope, empty vehicles, bricks and logs, and the children had the power to create their own world. The ideology expanded three years later, when the English landscape architect Lady Allen of Hurtwood came to visit in Copenhagen. Lady Allen of Hurtwood brought the idea back to Britain. The first adventure playground in England opened in Camberwell, south London in 1948. They soon spread to Liverpool, Bristol, Grimsby and throughout the UK. (Play & Playground; British Adventureplay; Play:ground; Wilson) Later on Lady Allen urged parents in New York to sue the city fathers “for emotional damage to their children because they failed to provide suitable and exciting playgrounds for them” (Bishop, 2007).

In the following three chapters I present three adventure playgrounds. An adventure playground can mean many things. It can be something as elaborate as a commercial adventure park with climbing tracks and zip-slides or as simple as a pop-up stick-and-stones playground. I concentrate on playgrounds in between of these two ends. The admission fee to a commercial park makes them inaccessible to some and a pop-up park is limited by time.

With the following three examples I explain what the concept of an adventure playground means to me. Playgrounds are very different from each other but all of them fit into my idea of an adventure playground. All of these playgrounds have the basic acknowledgement of free play, even though they are carried out in their own culturally fitting way.

For me the importance in these chosen playgrounds are that these are established, accessible all year around and they are more or less free of charge for children.

2.2



Der Abenteuerliche Bauspielplatz Kölle 37 is an adventure playground at Prenzlauer Berg in Berlin, Germany. The concept of Bauspielplatz goes to the year 1979 when a group called the Berlin group went around GDR with a wagon (Spielwagen Berlin) filled with playful games for children and adults. The idea was to create a playful cityscape. Their events were very popular and well-liked. Some members of the group thought that the venues were too short. So, in the mid 80's two members an idea to create something more permanent. The thought became reality when the era of GDR was over and investors got on board. In 1990 Netzwerk Spiel/ Kultur Prenzlauer Berg was established, offering a place for leisure and education for children and adolescents in the area.



Image 1. Kölle 37 started as a portable playground Spielwagen Berlin.

Nowadays the playground is financed by Berlin-Pankow district which covers the personnel costs and some of the material expenses. The organization also takes donations. "Here at the playground the children have the opportunity to build their own huts, make fire, work in the garden, work with animals or just play. There are different projects in which the children can develop their creativity. They also learn to work with different kinds of materials and tools. Playground provides a pottery, a workshop for wood and felt, a smithy and a rehearsal room for playing music." (www.kolle37.de)

In this playground children learn how to weave baskets, build huts and take care of bees. They work with basic elements: fire (in Berlin only places where it is allowed to have open fires are playgrounds), water (playing in puddles), earth (working with clay and digging holes in the ground), air (a lot of fresh air after school). Children



Image 2. Kolle 37 is gradually built by children.

Children have an opportunity to carry out their own ideas. Professional playground workers are there to support them but they intervene only in the case of danger. Their motto is: "Er macht sicher und umsichtig und ist letztlich ein besserer Schutz vor Gefährdungen als der vergebliche Versuch, diese aus dem Leben zu verbannen." "To learn safety and risk assessment is better protection for yourself than futile attempt to ban them from your life."

ASP Kolle 37 is free with an exception of excursions or overnight stays. Each day 30-100 children from the age of 6 to 16 visit the park. The playground area is 4 000 square meters and it is open all year round from Monday to Friday from 1.30 pm to 6 or 6.30 pm and on Saturdays 1 pm to 6 pm. Saturday is a family day when the whole family is welcome.

Mornings are sold to schools and kindergarten groups. They also offer an after school care club for 20 children. At nighttime the house is used for cultural and political activities and it can be rented for weddings and such.

2.3



The Land is an adventure playground located at Plas Madoc in Wrexham, Wales. It's located in one of the economically deprived areas in the UK (Welsh Government, 2015). The playground is run by the Association of Voluntary Organisations Wrexham (AVOW).

The Land is one of the projects that AVOW is running at Plas Madoc area. They also run a projects called Street Play and Get Out and Play which are for children from 5 years and up. Play workers visit each street on the estate and provide opportunities for play in the community. They have a project called Inclusion that provides support for children and young people who are unable to access any of the projects independently.

In 2014 playground was selected as one of the top 10 open Adventure Playgrounds in the UK by the Sport and Recreation Alliance. It has also been called the strangest playground on earth by an Australian news channel.

The playground was established in 2012 and it has been open ever since, excluding a period after it hit by an arsonist (Rowden, 2014). The playground is "for children and young people aged 5-16 aiming to provide a varied environment where children and young people can experience risk and challenge". It is open from Monday to Friday from 3.30 pm till 5.45 pm and on Sundays from 12 till 6 pm.



Image 3. The Land is “a playground filled with possibilities”.

The Land is an adventure playground like no other. Nothing is static and it is run by professional playworkers who are meant to be present and intervene in children’s play only if there is a dangerous situation. They stay in the background when children test their abilities with climbing, with fire, building and smashing things.

In 2015 documentarist Erin Davis made a short documentary about the nature of play, risk and hazard set in The Land, a Welsh adventure playground. Journalist Hanna Rosin reviewed the documentary in *The Atlantic* like this: “In half an hour this film will change everything you think you believe ... In scene after natural scene the truth becomes obvious: With a little bit of creativity, empathy and guidance, children can be freed to experience a much more fun, adventurous and fulfilling childhood.”

Due to the documentary The Land has become quite well known. Play researchers and child experts around the world are visit this playground that has a very unique pedagogical approach in supporting free and child-directed play. The playground has been a model for American child psychologists and playworkers on how to offer a free and open-ended play opportunity.

2.4



The Berkeley Adventure Playground is located in the Berkeley Marina. It was established in 1979. It is one of the three outdoor adventure playgrounds located in the state of California. It has been rated as a top 10 playground by National Geographic and as one of the Top 5 playspaces in the country.



Image 4.
The Berkeley Adventure Playground is open only during weekends and summer holidays.

The playground is meant for children over seven years of age, however younger children are welcome with adults. In many parts the playground is accessible by wheelchair. Opening hours vary depending on the time of the year. On Saturdays and Sundays it is open from 11am to 4pm all year round. When it's raining the playground is closed.

Entrance is free for general public. For groups of more than five you have to make a reservation and pay a fee. Fee of \$10 must be paid also if you “drop off” a child there. Other times parents are required to help with supervision. Every adult who enters the playground must sign a waiver (see appendix 1) at the entrance for themselves and their children.



Image 5.
Parents must sign a waiver
before entering the park.

Rules are strict for visiting parents: “Keep your cell phone in your pocket. Be present for your child. Your children need your attention and we need your help.”

At the school-age play area children can build their own playground accompanied by a responsible adult. Low-risk activities include hammering, sawing and painting.

Also the playground offers creative materials for imaginative play. A child can climb, slide and jump on kid-designed and built forts, boats, and towers. A zip-line offers a ride in the air. There are a bunch of tasks that kids need to do before they have tools; straighten ten stray nails, rip of five wooden splinters, collect some trash, or find one “Mr. Dangerous”, a sharp nail sticking out of wood. “Adventure Playground creates opportunities for children to learn cooperation, meet physical challenges and gain self confidence.”

At Berkeley playground children play mainly under the supervision of their parents but there are also group activities organized by the playworkers, like building fortresses at the beach.

2.5



In my mind, these three examples meet the concept of an adventure playground. All of them are financially supported by a municipality or a city. All of them are open all year and there are playworkers. In one of them parents aren't allowed to go at all, in one parents can come on one day, and in one they recommend or demand parents to be present at all times.

I see that the biggest role of APS Kalle 37 is to function as a place where children can learn practical skills in their own pace. It offers lot of different kinds of learning opportunities but the freedom comes from that you don't have to go along with any of them. If a child chooses to dig dirt that is just as good as any other decision. Playworkers are available and they skilfully teach children craft. Once a week the playground functions also a bonding place for the whole family. Since the playground is multi-functional and offers space to other kind of activities like music concerts, it is also a meeting point for the whole community. It is very much adopted by the community and that might be its biggest asset.

The Land is also well adopted by the local community and the organization offers also other kind of services to community, like creating equal and inclusive play opportunities for everyone. That's where the similarities ends. The Land is truly a playground like no other. It goes into extremes what comes to supporting autonomous play. Everything that children do there is open-ended. Playworkers don't intervene unless there is obvious danger. Children can freely climb, run, build, dig, shout and make a fire. If there is need to do any changes to the playground the playworkers do it secretly so

that the effect of adults doesn't show. You can see in the documentary how the children have truly claimed the space, it is their Land.

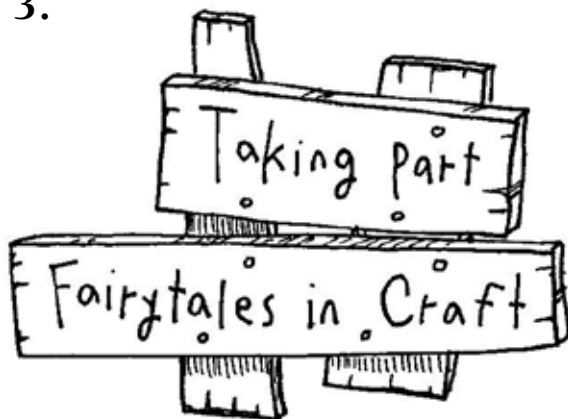
The Berkeley Marina playground is more like an outdoor activity park. It's not accessible to children without parents. Guardians need to either escort and drop them there or guardians need to go to playground with their children. Playworkers are there to guide both children and parents. It seems a very pleasant and creative place by the sea for the whole family.

Since my focus is in a free play I evaluate these playgrounds from that perspective. ASP Kolle is placed somewhere in between of free and organized play. There are organized activities and playworkers are available if needed but there are plenty of opportunities for free play. Children go to the park willingly and by themselves which enhances the sensation of freedom and free play. The Berkeley adventure playground lacks this feature. I think that The Land supports the ideology of free play far stronger than the rest of the playgrounds.



Image 6. The Land is not the most beautiful playground in the eyes of adults.

3.



At the end of summer 2015 I was invited by a friend, Annika Wahlström, to participate in a collective project Fairytale in Craft. After a negotiation with two other leaders of the project Luka Jelušić and Ola Anderson it was seen that I could bring something to this project from my field of interest and knowledge. These people were also responsible of all the bureaucracy, applying fundings, taking care of logistics, organizing workshops for rest of us and most importantly stitching the story and the realizing of this project.

They collected professionals from the performative field and also skilled craftspersons who are experts in their own materials: wood, textile and metal.

“Fairytale in Craft is a multisensory playscape of craft-objects inspired by invented contemporary mythologies. It involves collaboration of several HDK-Steneby alumns and performing arts professionals. The project wants to encourage and learn from the way kids understand their world through play. We are based in Dals Långed, in the heart of Dalsland.”



Fairytale in Craft uses the Laxsjö creature in its stories.

Drawing by Saša Jantolek.

“The project is not just about flight of fantasy for children: we are interested in researching whether imaginative storytelling can stimulate making skills. The pilot project that we’re working on at the moment attempts to lay a basis for that exploration: it delivers a materialization of a fairytale, and through active engagement in a dreamlike, immersive environment takes children on a journey which ends in several possible ways: be it making, storytelling, or adventure play.” (fairytalesincraft.com)

In October 2015 some of us took part in the Growing with Design conference in Gothenburg. The theme was Discover more about design for and with children, through both theory and practice. There were a lectures held by pedagogues, designers, performative artists, storytellers, architects and so on. For me maybe the most important ones were Lieselotte van Leeuwen’s and Mathieu Gielen’s talk about play for play’s sake, when Dr. Anne Bamford opened up the theory of Essence of Creativity, Nils Norman’s talk about playscapes, playgrounds and playgrounds as institutions – and maybe my favorite – Gro Dahle’s lecture where she opened up a new world for me about anarchy of picture books, how they can also carry very heavy subjects.

After the intense and mind buzzing conference days the whole crew of Fairytale in Craft met in Dals Långed. We had a nice extended weekend filled with lectures and workshops that each of us had prepared.

We started the weekend with lectures. First one was with Mette Westerberg. Mette Westerberg is one of the designers and makers of the Lekplatsbolaget, a company that designs and makes playgrounds that are often related to site’s history or to a known fairytale. “Lekplatsbolaget designs, builds and provides turnkey playgrounds – super fine places where people can play of just be and dream, small and big together.” (lekplatsbolaget.se)

The second lecturer was Annelies Vaneycken who told about her project The Office for Public Play. “Office for Public Play researches the influence play can have on the culture, shape and functioning of the city and its public spaces. Play unites and builds bridges between cultures and generations and seeks to contribute to a healthy, liveable and sustainable city.” (officeforpublicplay.org)

Days continued with our own lectures about mythologies, storytelling workshops and other exercises that prepared us for the brainstorming sessions to come. I had prepared a game with sensomotoric activity which contained collaboration and problem solving. I had set up an environment that imi-

tated a damaged nuclear power plant, located in Dals Långed. In the game participants tried to salvage the town by collecting numbered notes from the destroyed power plant. Some participants weren't allowed to speak or touch anything and other participants were blind and could touch on things. The game went onward in pairs where the other needed to guide and other needed to collect things from the area that I had staged. After the game I spoke a little about sensory deprivation and how to enhance certain senses.



Image 7. From the left: Annelies Vaneycken, Cecilie Jörstad, Ola Andersson and Annika Wahlström are listening to Nordic mythologies.

After the workshop weekend we agreed to meet via Skype and have a brainstorming platform at Tacck.com, share photos at Dropbox and communicate via e-mail. During the whole time we met twice through Skype. Communication turned out to be rather challenging for all of us due to the unpleasantness relating to the technological feature of it. Retrospectively I could say that we should have had more meetings via Skype.

The project went onward with the persistent work of the project leaders. The foundations of the project were placed, story was written and loads of paperwork and applications were done by the Dals Långed people. Mostly I tried to hold on and understand where the project was heading. I am super thankful for them for dealing with all of the bureaucracy.

Everything was wrapped around Elmer's story (see appendix 2), a story that Annika Wahlström and Björn Fast Nagell wrote. The story was about a creature living in Laxsjö. Things took a sudden turn toward realization when the approval letter was dropped in the Fairytales in Craft mailbox: the project would get financial support from the region and from the county.

3.1



The pilot project was named as Mytheriet and it was placed in Dals Långed, Sweden.

Local municipality, Bengtsfors kommun gave a space for the project to use. The space was a huge old mechanical workshop, Långeds Mekanisk next to the Laxsjö. The intention was to open the pilot project for public in August 2016.

The aim of the Mytheriet project was to build an immersive storytelling environment with handmade and well-designed objects in quality materials. The primary activity conducted in the pilot is taking children on a journey of discovering Elmer's story: a fictional account of events taking place in Dalsland at various times in the past. The story is unveiled through three distinctive environments, with a narrator accompanying the participating children: Elmer's room, Room on a Sunken Ship and Shipyard. (Fairytales in Craft, 2016)

Image 8. Långeds Mekanisk had been empty for about four year.



My role and responsibility in this group shifted along the way and quite unexpectedly it expanded to new measures. I was asked if I could be in charge of the making space for children, called the Shipyard. For starters I failed in making proper plans for the space. The physical distance made it hard for me to comprehend the plans for the shipyard and also I did not understand the size of the space. But I decided not to worry about it and instead just go and see the site. Then I would understand. I was sure things would turn out fine, I would be among friends.

3.2



Since I was not able to produce any pre-plans for the project beforehand, the whole five-week period became a very intuitive process. I tried to follow Luka's (Luka Jelušić) idea in an intuitive way, making a lot of compromises. The intuitive process opened up a possibility for me to observe the evolution of the space in relation to my emotions and to the things I had read.

It was agreed that the Shipyard-Skeppsvarv would work with the Mytheriet story but also independently.

This is how I described it in the beginning: "Building a space for autonomous play an adventure playground. The Shipyard is semi autonomous space also regarding to other parts of the spaces in Långeds Mekaniska.

It will work with the story but also independently. Mostly the shipyard has objects that are related to sea or lakes, nautical objects but also things that are merely strange and peculiar, objects that can be used in various ways. Switches, buttons, cranks and hatches. Then there will be neutral objects like boards and planks that children can join together with hammer and nails. Build and create a physical presence of their own visions and stories.

The link with the story is when child discovers similar peculiar objects in a shipyard as in other rooms in a story. Characters of the story won't be so visible but objects will carry the story to the shipyard."

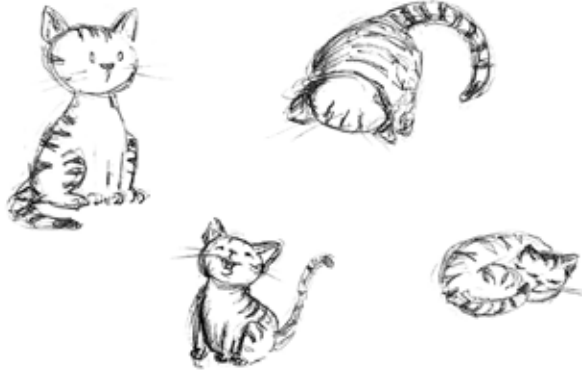
The first step was to break the raw quality of the space. Make it clean, safe and functional for starters and then find building materials, props and getting right tools and machines. All those steps were fun and jolly but also very time consuming in the beginning. Every spare time I had, mostly right before laying my head down to the pillow, I tried to think about how the space would work for adventure play and how the space would enable and inspire making after storytelling. At the time I did not care about any of these mentioned matters because I was very excited about the project and I thought that it's fantastic to be a part of something so unique.

In next chapter I try to summarize the whole five weeks in a best way that I can. I try to look at things objectively.

3.2



In the beginning of the project I did not have any eligible idea to write down or not to mention a CAD-drawing of it, as some of the participants did. So, I decided to make a cat-drawing instead, and to go along with the process and plan things as the project went along, relying on the thought in the back of my mind that the idea of the project would lead my hands and creation.



THE SHIPYARD CAT-DRAWING 2016

Very early in this process I realized the paradox in attempting to create a place for autonomous play. I understood that my process of thinking was taking the autonomy away from the children. Every step that I was about to make was step taking away from the children.

Standing in the empty space I saw the walls around me, door that would be locked, rules that would be set, and structures that were about to be built. The illusion of autonomy crumbled and I realized that I needed to give up my dream. Give up so I could create something for that space for the project. The producer had made plans how there would be boats indoors and they would play quite a big role filling up the space. It was already somewhat set what we would construct to make the space work as a continuum of the story. I took the task as a challenge to follow the producer's concept for starters and then let my own vision guide me the rest of the way. Simultaneously with creation I would observe my own working pace in relation to when we would/ should/ could drop our gloves and let the children claim the space. I slowly turned the crank in my head from creating an autonomous space for children into creating a space for autonomous play for children.



Walking in the big industrial hall conjured quite strong feelings. At the same time its vastness terrified me and at the same time its multiple possibilities made me very excited.

Image 9. Långeds Mekanisk before the building of the Shipyard.

First days in that old metal manufacturing hall were about coarse cleaning including sweeping and washing the premises from floor to ceiling. Then bit of plumbing and removing the grease from the floor with sawdust. In every corner there were strange bottles of toxic liquids, rodent poison boxes and other unidentified industrial substances. I removed all the most obvious hazardous matters from the space.

Next step was filling up the space. We needed lot of things for that. It started with collecting the building materials and props, then buying and borrowing the necessities like tools and machinery. We really did not have much in the beginning.

We started collecting items from flea markets and discarded places. Among one of the discarded places worth mentioning was an old abandoned mining village, Stora Stranden, not very far from Dals Långed. At the old mine there were only a few buildings standing and in even those few nature had reclaimed its space. Maybe due to careless visitors the houses had broken windows and doors were already wide open when we arrived. Openness made it easy for us to enter but had also made it easy for the weather, plants and animals to enter. Time and animals had left their inscriptions there.



Image 10. Me opening a sewer.

Place was a treasury of things that have been long forgotten. We picked up piles of wrinkled documents where paper had turn brown, old containers of aliments, wooden boxes, old paint buckets, rusty tools and many other things. If even one of us saw that some item would be useful we took it. We all knew that the patina would be nearly impossible to copy. We collected two full van loads of treasures, if not to use for this project then possibly for projects yet to come.



Image 11. From the left:
Biba Jelušić, Annika
Wahlström, Ola Anders-
son and Luka Jelušić at
Stora Stranden.



Image 12. Me at Stora Stranden treasury.

Another important place for collecting materials was Hedekas, a metal scrapyard. The most amazing and stimulating place that I know. At Hedekas you can buy new materials too but for me the graveyard of discarded scrap is the place where I want to do my purchases.

The whole site turns into a playground in my head when I walk there. I pick up an object, maybe it is a part of some sort of machine, and immediately my imagination starts to fly. Item turns into a part of an airplane, a submarine or a spaceship. I can see the rest of the imaginative device in front of me as bits and pieces start to connect.

As expected, me and Annika (Annika Wahlström) found loads and loads of items that we could use in creation of Shipyard and other parts of Mytheriet.

Next step was to bring the first boat in. Of course it was not a walk in the park. The boat was rotten and fragile, the trailer had a flat tire. Luka and Ola (Ola Andersson) fixed the boat and built really nice wonky pier that suited the boat perfectly.



Image 13. Transporting a rotten boat to the Shipyard had many turns.

In the meanwhile I started to figure out what to do with all the scrap material. I rolled around items and I started to put bits and pieces together. I started to make a crane from washing machine drum and long bars of tube metal. But in the end instead crane it became one person's merry-go-round buoy (image 13).

We got a lot of steel table legs from discarded tables that Steneby School donated and from one of them Luka asked me to build a watchtower.

So I did.



Image 14.



Image 15 and 16. From tables to towers.

And I kept on building it until I remembered what happened to me not so long time ago in Helsinki. I was walking behind an adult and a child in central park of Helsinki. All of a sudden the child noticed something in the woods. S/he said: "Some children have built something there." Adult responded: "Mmm..yes, it's a hut of some sort. But how do you know that kids have built it?" Child responded: "Because it looks like that kids have built it."

This memory struck me when I was making the playspace for the Shipyard. I wanted to create a playspace for autonomous play. Autonomy requires that you feel like you own the space, some kind of authorship. The space needed things that children could identify with and feel like they belonged there.

So I kept on going. I connected the tables and made all the parts in a way that children might with just a hammer, nails and a piece of wood. I finished it only where I thought it needed to be finished, mostly because of the safety reasons, but also building beginnings for hideaways, leaving tempting gaps for children to patch up. (Images 16-19)



Images 17-20.

I named this part *koiija*, a hut. *Koiija* and its surrounding became the main target of my observation and the workshops that we started to run right after things looked safe enough for the children to come.

I “received” the best working partner ever, Alex (Jonas Alexander Wiig). With him it was brilliant to bounce ideas back and forth. I wish that I would have had more time with this super creative person in creation of the space. Just before the first workshop everybody was there to make the space function in the best way possible: Biba (Biba S. Jelušić) painting, Annika organizing and Luka checking up the safety of the space.

The first workshop was a pilot for the pilot, a practice round to see how children would start to create after storytelling. First there was a storytelling session and then a small discussion about the story. Then we continued with creating and playing. In the first workshop we told a shorter version of the main story of Elmer (Wahlström and Fast Nagell, 2016).

“There is a ship with a party, music and dancing. The creature hears the music coming from the ship and takes the ship in its embrace, into a long embrace. The creature is dozing happily and taken by the streams and eventually captured by the northbound ice. The pressure of the ice crushes the ship. Eventually the ice melts and bit by bit the ship escapes from the embrace of the creature. This happened already a long long time ago but still you can find pieces of wood from that boat from the shores of the Laxsjö. And how do you know that those pieces you find are from the boat? If you put your ear against the wood you can hear how the wood sings, hums the songs that were played in that boat.”



Image 21.
Annika Wahlström (second from the right) is telling Elmer's story.

After the storytelling we went to the lake shore to find those wood pieces (me and Annika had implemented suitable looking pieces of wood there). The idea was to assemble those pieces to keep the creature calm. Together we listened and children chose which pieces they wanted to bring to the workshop. We had decided that indoors the play would not be so structured. Children could choose whether they wanted to continue with the story or if they wanted to do something else.

For older children it was easier to follow the story and continue with making. For smaller children the focus shifted between building alongside of the story and building the *koi*ja and playing there.

The children needed a signal that they started to build on the *koi*ja. After that they shifted very fluently from place to another in that play area by building, painting and playing.

We did not make any rules for the children. It was interesting to see that without rules about putting things back in their place or washing the brushes children did not make any initiative to do so. So at the end of the day we were cleaning and putting things back in their place. It made me wonder that would they put things in their own place if they would think that the tools and equipments were theirs. Anyhow we decided to have some cleaning rules for the next workshop.

The children seemed to love the experience. All were very enthusiastic and mixed age groups did not seem to distract the play experience, on the contrary the more skilled children were helping and taking care of the smallest ones. Adult guidance was needed giving the play signal and also encouraging children to interact with the play structures, like approving if they were hesitant what to paint and can they hammer a piece of wood somewhere. Craft creation happened relatively automatically in the place that was designated for it.

Before the next workshop we had bit of time to fix up the place and add up new things. We decided to make the ground around the *koi*ja safer by building a frame and filling it up with wood chips. In the next workshop the story was told in a boat, so it was important to fix the boat properly.

Cecilie (Cecilie Jørstad) was in charge of the storytelling in the second session. This time we told a different story. For this workshop pilot we decided to close the *koi*ja area, partly because of the safety reasons but also partly



Images 22-24. Children started building after storytelling in the first workshop. In the second workshop the elves had closed the Koiija area.

because the whole session was decided to be shorter and we wanted to direct the focus solely into making. Closing the koiija area turn out to be a nice experience for us to discover how adaptable children are.

After the storytelling we asked children to sit on the piers and listen to a few instructions. Right away one child was curious about he closed koiija area. So we told a story about elves who were helping us build the playground when we were not there. Elves are really skilled builders and they had discovered how the glue what we had been using was not strong enough for this playground and they recommend us to close the place until they get stronger

glue for it. The children wondered how long it would take. We continued the story by telling that it might take several days because they have to take long journey to the mountains and collect slime from the mountain snails. They have the strongest slime because they have to move on steep or even vertical surfaces. From that slime elves will make that super strong glue. It was surprising that nobody questioned our story. Since we got down to business with elves we also told that the elves were really pedantic about the order of the tool box. So all the tools needed to be in their place after the workshop.

The making itself went really well and the children were really into it. It was agreed that at this workshop Cecilia would tell another story outside after the making. That did not turn out to be the best idea in the end. Because children had so little time for making they were too hyped and could not focus on the second story. The whole session included many learning points for future workshops but also a lot of things that worked out; like cleaning brushes and putting the tools back. Children were reminding and collaborating with each other.

Before the last workshop we continued to improve the place. This time I was working mainly alone so not so much changed. I added some more walking platforms and a rope coming down from the beam high above.



Image 25 and 26.
I made some adjustments in between the workshops.

The third workshop was lead by Jonatan (Jonatan Malm). This workshop started from outside and his story or introduction for the workshop was related to singing wood pieces. First children were hitting pieces of wood

with sticks and listening what kind of sound they produced. After that they started to hammer nails into the piece of wood. Jonatan adds an amplifier to the wood and the playing continued. The sound came out from the speaker and children were very dazed and excited. After this children went inside to continue the building or playing.

The addition of the playground was well received. Those children who had been at the first workshop knew right away how to interact with the *koija* and the rest of the playspace. Raw wood surfaces were inviting to paint. The rule of one color at the time made children to collaborate.



Image 27. Children started to collaborate. "Titta! Jag har en röd färg och han har vit och nu det blir rosa!"

After some time Jonatan invited the children to talk about their day. Everyone was pleased and expressed their enjoyment. When Jonatan asked which part of the day was the best, the workshop part with the amplifier or the free play, everybody responded free play. I was shocked about those comments. I thought that Jonatan had the coolest workshop ever; learning how to hammer and play the wood with the amplifier.

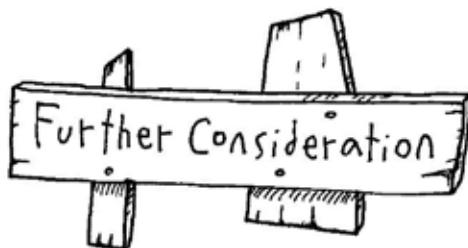
The comments were like slaps in the face. Playing isn't for me, for the instructor, for the adults. There is no right answer, children have the right to think what they want and that does not take away the fact that the workshop was educational and fun. They just liked the non-organized part better.

My time with Mytheriet was coming to an end, almost five weeks with long and intensive days had passed by. I still had a few days to finish up what I had started and leave some kind of afterthought to the others. Obviously thoughts that I presented were my own and highly leaning on the ideology of free play. The producers would make the decisions on what type of playspace it would become. I would not be there when the journey through Mytheriet would start and that was a pity. I sure would have wanted to see it but circumstances were what they were and I had a ferry to catch.



Image 28. The Shipyard in all its glory.

3.4



Now in retrospect, when I compare this project to the ones I have done before, like being scenographer in theatre productions, the planning time was too short for me, and somewhat lonely. Working relatively intuitively within this timeframe was the right way to execute my part. I think if I would redo it I would put more emphasis on the pedagogical matters and getting to know the community. I think that this time the importance of creating and building something concrete in the space was ran over the softer values.

The whole process taught me to see the physical and mental boundaries that surround this type of play environment. Time and accessibility are one of the few obstacles that I needed to consider for further development.



My initial idea was to create an autonomous playspace for children. When I entered the industrial hall I understood that the idea was bound to fail because it is impossible to have an autonomous space in a ready constructed building. This particular space would finally be double constructed, first built by a construction company and then built by me. What would be left for the children to build and to claim ownership.

So I changed the idea and turned the project into an attempt to make a space for autonomous play. In this idea the constraints were time, money and labor force. No time, no money nor people to hold the doors open for the children to come and go as they wish.

In order for the space to function as space for autonomous play the time limitations should be pulled to a minimum and the accessibility for the space should be to the maximum. Otherwise the playspace would not be so very different from any other spaces for play. We were directing children when to play by setting time limits. The children did not have enough time to claim ownership of the place.

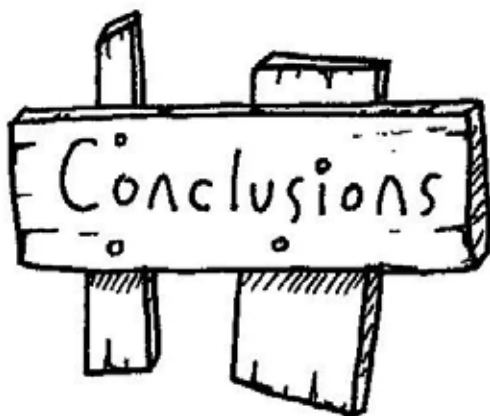
But it was a good start.

In conclusion, we built a fine adventure playground, although a bit too organized and staged. The playspace was too much about us and not about the children. As Bob Hughes said in his lecture (IPA-2011): “Playground is children’s domain, it’s not the domain for our (adult) imagination. Playsetting has nothing to do what we think. it’s about what they (children) think.” We did as it was planned and I think it will eventually work really well as a platform for educative and instructed activities, as a “something else”-playground and it will work perfectly as a playspace after storytelling.

For the next attempt I would not construct so much. I would invite children to build more for starters, children from different age groups and genders. I would go back to the sensation that I got when I was wondering around Hedekas scrapyard.



Image 29. Free play needs time to develop.



Play is an essential element of wellbeing in every person's life. From toddlers to seniors it has a purpose and it has a key role in how we interact with the world and how we perceive the world. Play is not only an activity but also a state of mind. Play is a key that unlocks unwanted emotions like frustration, shame, guilt and self esteem.

Neuroscientist, psychologists, social scientists and biologists have proven in many ways that play shapes our brains, supports problem solving abilities and sustains our empathy. Play helps us to take part in very complex social groups and create relationships with each other.

Uplifting the value of play would be the first step towards emotional well being. Nobody questions the value of love and caring as an act or state of mind. This is how we should see play as well.

With this thesis I have tried to understand even a fragment of the features of play, where and how it exist. How we define play and how it shows in different stages of our lives. The importance of play has opened up in front of me. The knowledge that I have gained during this thesis is reinforced my need to work more for the autonomy of an individual. Through childhood playing experiences we can see quite a lot of the development of an individual.

I am more and more aware that play can exist anywhere. It does not necessarily require a designated place. It does not even require a physical place. Play is the most perfect tool to learn many things. In play the most essential elements like volition, free will and voluntary act are present.

We can try to build the fanciest playground and imagine that it is what children want for their play. Everybody knows the story that when you buy a toy for a child, child prefers to play more with the package than with the toy. The matter of facilitating children for play is as simple as that. We as adults should not direct too much how, where and with what play should happen. All the commercial playgrounds are projections of an adult's vision of a playground, a simple vacant space with "loose parts" as play objects could facilitate physical play environment better.

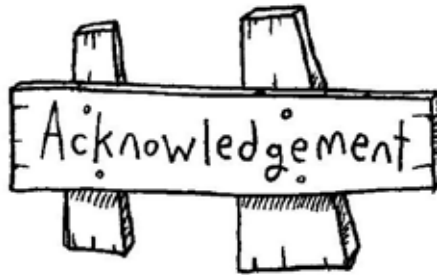
In Nordic countries, excluding Denmark, we don't really have any examples of above mentioned types of adventure playgrounds.

Time is the most expensive and precious play device that you can ever give to the child. You can't find it from the supermarket and wrap it in a nice package. It is in its best just as it is, uncontrolled and undirected time, for play. Playing freely in mixed age and gender groups children learn self-assertion, negotiation skills and compromising skills. Free play teaches craft skills, problem solving and risk assessment.

It is a lot to ask from a playspace. Therefore the creator of the playspace needs to make very strict decisions on which directions to take the idea of that particular playground. Choose and bare the consequences. Constructed playplace can never be a platform for fully autonomous play. So the biggest question is how much the designer leaves space for autonomous play to occur. What is the relation of free play to organized features of the playspace. How much we direct children with visual, physical and psychological elements. What does the creator bring and what do children bring into that playspace. Who dictates the circumstances?

We must be aware of the nuances and details. Why? Because free play is important. If the child participates day after day in organized activities, we as adults are denying children the opportunity to learn how to take control of their lives. I share the concern of play researchers: If we don't pull up our sleeves and work for the children's right for free play we might end up in serious problems. We need to educate a new generation of professional playworkers. We need to create places for free play, we need to facilitate play for children with three Frees: freely chosen, free of charge, and free access (Holmes, 2015).

"Our job is not to shape our children's minds; it's to let those minds explore all the possibilities that the world allows." (Gopnik, 2016, p 20)



Fairytales in Craft Pilot project 2016 producers Luka Jelušić and Annika Wahlström that I could participate to the project and make my part of the project work as part of my thesis too.

Hilma, Freya, Ymir, Albert, Ellen, Elliott, Jacob, Molly, Brina, Naya, and other lovely children who took part to workshops.

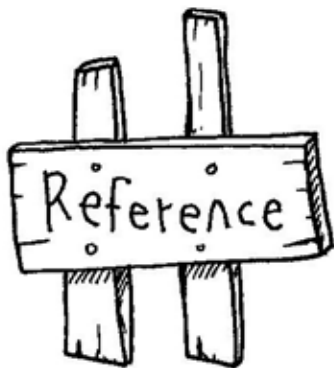
The whole very skilled Fairytales in Craft group and special thanks to Anni-ka Wahlström being a good friend and a supporter in this project. You always know the right things to say.

Niko, Lumi, Halla, Veikka, Jaakko, Mila, Max, Pihla, Joel, Jere, Rene, Elsi and Elsa (+your guardians that I have had the possibility to get to know you). You have been constantly in my mind during this process. With you I have discovered the differences between individuals and also on the other hand I have realized how much we are products of our surroundings. I wish you never stop playing.

Taina Rajanti being very encouraging tutor.

Laura Ihalainen, because you are precious in numerous ways.

My lovely wife Sanna, just because.



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APPENDIX I

Berkeley Adventure Playground Waiver



PARKS, RECREATION & WATERFRONT

Rec. Division • Shorebird Park Nature Center • 160 University Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94710
(510) 981-6720 • Fax (510) 981-6725 • TDD (510) 981-6903 • naturecenter@cityofberkeley.info

School year REGISTRATION INFORMATION for ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND

Welcome to the City of Berkeley's Marina Experience Programs. Adventure Playground's unique facility and staff are geared to provide the elements of play that cannot be found in most play areas. Children use hammers, saws, paint, nails, and recycled items to build creatively. The Playground creates opportunities for kids to learn cooperation, meet physical challenges, and gain self-confidence. This program is for individual children 7 years and up to participate in, not groups. This does not serve as day care.

- ***This Registration form is for children 7 years or older, who will be staying FOR THREE HOURS OR LESS without parental supervision in the Playground.***
- ***These children must have this current completed registration form on file and must be signed in and out by an adult each day.***
- ***Please leave your child with food, drinks, a hat and sunscreen.***
- ***Children 6 years and younger must be supervised by an adult at all times and are free.***
- ***All children must be picked up ½ hour before closing.*** A late fee of \$15 per every 10 minutes the child is left after 5 p.m. will be charged.
- We reserve the right to deny children access to programs if they have any behavior problems that might endanger themselves or any other children.

The fee for children staying without an adult is \$10.00 per child for up to three hours.

1. REGISTER AND PAY FEES IN THE NATURE CENTER (next to the restrooms)
2. BRING THE RECEIPT or Payment Ticket TO THE STAFF IN THE PLAYGROUND
3. SIGN IN/OUT AT THE FRONT COUNTER. Put the receipt number or payment card number on the form along with the time you expect to pick up your child, and a phone number of where you can be reached immediately. Thanks

KEEP THIS FORM FOR INFORMATION.



BERKELEY MARINA EXPERIENCE PROGRAM • ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND • STRAW BALE BUILDING
<http://www.cityofberkeley.info/adventureplayground>



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REGISTRATION FOR ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND

- *All children must be 7 years or older and have this SCHOOL YEAR registration form on file.
- *The fee is **\$10.00 per child** for up to three hours each day. Checks to: City of Berkeley.
- *Once you have registered your child in Adventure Playground, **YOU MUST SIGN IN AND OUT EACH DAY!** Please leave a current phone number because:

This registration form gives our staff a contact number in case we need to get in touch during the day.
Please be sure that the number you write down when you sign in IS WHERE YOU OR SOMEONE WHO IS ALSO THE CHILD'S GUARDIAN will be.

(This form is for your children only, do not sign up friends. They need their parents' permission.) Number the order of importance of who to call first please.(#1)

Your child's name _____ age _____

Participating sibling's name _____ age _____

Address _____ city _____ zip _____

Home phone _____ (#) work phone _____ (#) cell _____ (#)

Parent or guardian's name _____

emergency contact person _____ phone# _____

Additional emergency contact _____ phone# _____

Person who is authorized to pick up my child _____
medical information that we should know (allergies...)

MY CHILD MAY NOT LEAVE THE PLAYGROUND ON HIS/HER OWN.

I have told my child(ren) that he/she does **not** have permission to leave the Playground except for trips to the bathroom. If my child leaves the Playground without telling staff and getting staff permission, I will not hold the Adventure Playground staff responsible. *Please have a discussion with your child about these expectations of them now.*

Signature of parent or guardian _____

PLEASE COMPLETE BOTH THE FRONT & BACK OF THIS FORM AND GIVE IT TO STAFF

FOR STAFF USE ONLY _____ (staff initials)
Name: _____



BERKELEY MARINA EXPERIENCE PROGRAM • ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND • STRAW BALE BUILDING
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WAIVER OF ANY INJURY CLAIM

Date _____

1. I would like my child to stay and play at the City of Berkeley's Marina Adventure Playground (hereafter "Adventure Playground").
2. I am aware that play at the Adventure Playground includes, among other things, my child's use of hammers, saws, and nails, and playing on structures built, in part, by children. I am also aware that these activities are hazardous, and that the hazards include, but are not limited to, my child being cut or injured by rusty nails sticking out of boards lying on the ground, loose boards falling off forts, and a potentially dangerous tool such as a wood saw. I am also aware that other hazards at Adventure Playground include falling off the forts, cargo net, rope swing, tire wall, ladders, or the "zip" line, among other things.
3. In exchange for my child being allowed to play at Adventure Playground, I agree that my child and/or I (and our heirs, assignees, guardians, and personal representatives) WILL NOT SUE the City of Berkeley, its employees, or agents for any injury or damage my child or I sustain at Adventure Playground, including but not limited to any injury or damage caused by a DANGEROUS CONDITION in the Playground, or NEGLIGENCE OR GROSS NEGLIGENCE by the City, its employees, or agents.
4. I understand that on behalf of my child and myself, (1) I am RELEASING the City, its employees, and agents from liability, if my child or I am injured at Adventure Playground, and (2) I fully ASSUME THE RISK OF MY CHILD BEING INJURED at Adventure Playground to the fullest extent permitted by California law.
5. We also agree to allow the City of Berkeley to gather and publish visual images of my child from video or camera for use in public education about the Marina Experience Programs Adventure Playground.

SIGNATURE of PARENT or LEGAL GUARDIAN _____

NAME OF CHILD (ren) _____



BERKELEY MARINA EXPERIENCE PROGRAM • ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND • STRAW BALE BUILDING
<http://www.cityofberkeley.info/adventureplayground>

APPENDIX II

Elmer's story

In the year 1930 in the middle of Dalsland the third generation switchboard operator stretches out the window and calls on her loved ones with a melody reaching farther than the church bells. Be it cattle, cats or family members, they all respond to her calling by immediately heading home. A combination of heritage and training has made her exceptionally skilled in communication. She reads the skies like newspaper. She can interpret the background noise in the radio and understand the chatter of the birds while keeping track of the every week increasing amount of telephone calls passing her switchboard. Records and forwards messages coming through the canal system, enjoying the harmony of the spheres. And every afternoon she stretches out the window to call on everyone she loves to come home. Only this time is different. Her husband and daughter who this morning went out on Laxsjön for the first time in the newly built rowing boat doesn't come home. They are nowhere to be found.

The boat was a steady one, built out of a special kind of soaked wood that had been found washed up on the shores around these parts for centuries. Her husband had been collecting bits and pieces ending up in the locks where he worked over the years, as had many others. In cottages and mansions alike people were fascinated by the unusual material although no one could really tell what made it so special. The crafty countryfolk had turned it into doorknobs, coat hangers, tabletops and whatnots. The canal company had even used it in the floodgates. Sometimes the findings were already something, though it was often difficult to tell exactly what they were. Strange tales around Laxsjön. People going insane. Music coming out of nowhere. The breeze sounding like breathing.

When her husband finally had enough material, he had built a boat. It was a good boat, no doubt. But there was something more to it. Neighbours would come by just to look at it. The count at Baldersnäs placed an order and paid well in advance. A simple rowing boat had not gone for such a generous amount around these parts before, but somehow no one found it unreasonable. This was a very special boat. And now it was gone. And he was gone. And their daughter was gone. She had told him to not go out on Laxsjön that day. It was just a feeling she had, maybe something she had heard. There seems to be unrest in the waters these days, she said. But he didn't listen. He was eager to find more material to start building the next boat, and he was

sure to find it out there. It was like the boat in itself knew where to go. And he himself felt a strange attraction. His eyes constantly wandering to a spot in the middle of the lake. No different from any other, but somehow special, beautiful. And he wanted his daughter to see it too.

The search party goes on for two weeks, and then everyone agrees it's time to get on with life. Strange things had been known to happen on that lake. Our switchboard operator still calls her cattle home, but the melody is a far more melancholic one. She still overhears the birds chatter and listens to the background noise from outer space, but the swiftness and curiosity is gone. She stops talking. The only one she speaks to is her son. She tells him everything, even though he is too young to understand. She listens, and calls on her loved ones. The raven stops by on a regular basis. She keeps listening, recording, investigating. Building instruments to record and amplify the faintest signals. Life is very calm in the village during these years. No strange sightings on the lake.

One night there is a storm and the telephone cable breaks and drops into the lake. She receives a message. The next day she walks into Laxsjön to never come back.

No one really knows what to do with all the stuff in her home, all the documents and instruments and recordings. The boy is sent off to an aunt in Vänersborg. They automatize the telecommunications, bar the window, shut the doors and let it all sit there.

It's the day before midsummer eve and a ten year old boy is standing on the old, weathered pier down at the Långbro berthage skipping stones. He can make the rock bounce three times before sinking. He tries again. Three bounces and the rock sinks.

The boy looks at his watch, listens and climbs a tall tree from where he can watch the railbus ramble through Dals Långed.

It makes a halt at the Långbron station and a handful of tourists get off. Among them is an old man, crooked and scrawny, carrying a well worn suitcase. The railbus leaves. The old man gazes out over Laxsjön, sniffs, listens, hums to himself. He strolls over the canal-bridge at a surprising pace considering his age, crosses the busy road without looking neither left nor right, enters Kanalvillan, up the stairs, unlocks a door, slips inside and locks the door behind him.

The room is dark. The old man smells it, sniffing, almost tasting it. He walks up to the window, pulling up the blinds with a rattle. The sunshine sifts in through the dust and illuminates the tiny room. From floor to ceiling the walls are covered in bookshelves, the entire space is enclosed in the spines of old books with writings in languages both familiar and unknown. A miniature Alexandria.

The rest of the room is covered in yellowed sheets. He thoroughly removes and folds them one by one and reveals a small divan, a windsor chair, a small desk with a typewriter, pens, notes, blueprints and a magnifying glass with lighting. A pipe is resting on the edge of a crystal ash tray and in the ceiling a big electric chandelier. The magnetophone stands on a stool under which is the box with the collection of microphones and cables. He takes his time. Enjoys it. Stacks the sheets in a neat pile and continues. The filing cabinet, the card-index with the cards meticulously filled out, the little wayward german safe, the entire room appears to come from a different time.

The last sheet seems to cover a cupboard or perhaps a small piano. Carefully he removes it, lets it fall to the floor, and exposes an old switchboard, with cables and buttons, switches and lamps, the headphones and the classic funnel-shaped microphone. The old man takes a deep breath, closes his eyes, lets his hands follow the shape of the beautiful apparatus, fondles it.

He starts to slightly shiver, retracts his hands, heavily sighs and coughs. Waves his arms as if to fan away smoke, hurries up to the window, opens it and inhales the smell of summer. Turning around he accidentally stumbles on something that tumbles across the floor. He is startled. It's not supposed to be anything there. With great effort he bends down to see what it was. On all four, feeling with his hands, he finds something and looks at it with fascination. A small locomotive, beautifully carved from wood, hardly bigger than his little finger. It looks brand new. It is as if the wood is glowing. He studies it with his hands, reads it with his fingertips, closes his fist around it and mumbles:

I can't see you, but I know you're here. I can sense it. I wish I could see your face, look you in the eyes and tell you how good it is to be here. There is so many nice things here. But you are not here. I am here. I wish you were here.

He searches his pocket and finds a little wooden locomotive, exactly the same, but worn and darkened by time. He holds them right next to each other. They are completely identical and a whole world is passing between them. The old man closes his eyes, listens. There is a womans voice:

There is a frequency to everything in the world. Every thing sings. All matter vibrates. Waves meet and merge and affect each other.

The voice fades away, but echoes in the room. Waves meet and merge and affect each other.... affect each other.... The old man holds the two locomotives as close to each other as if they were one. He closes his eyes and listens, breathes deeply, slowly, focused.

The voice continues:

“Several thousand years ago, in prehistoric times, deep down in the salty ocean, a creature with exceptional sensitivity to soundwaves and an insatiable longing for beauty, heard something it had never heard before. Up on the surface, a ship had just left shore, embarking on a ceremonial journey to celebrate a wedding. It was the crown princess in one of the most notable civilisations of prehistoric times who was about to be married, and in those days a union between a princess and her prince was concern of all the potentates and leaders of the known world. All of the most prominent members of all important guilds and fields were present at the ceremony to bless the royal couple with their gifts. With hoisted sails and all flags fully flown the ship steered above the oceanic abyss. An orchestra of 24 masterful musicians set to work with trompers, clavitaras, rumbleboxes, feebleswitches and gongs. The music was breathtaking, even to the creature who usually only needed a breath every ten years or so. The creature followed the ship on its way. Swimming just below, hearing the music mix with laughter and cheering, it was filled with a warm and calm feeling.

After a long journey, in the middle of the ocean where no land could be seen, the music stopped. It was the wedding night and a lingering and meditative ceremony to secure the succession was to begin. The creature was aghast by the sudden silence. It slapped the ship, as you would a broken radio, to make the sounds start again.”

Wait, wait! The old man springs up with surprising suddeny, completely dazzled he sits down by the typewriter and carefully puts the locomotives right next to it. Then it is like he almost rushes the keyboard with extraordinary anxiety. He takes no notice of the boy who is hanging in the branches outside. The boy who elegantly climbs in through the open window. The boy who settles himself in the window frame as if it was the most natural thing in the world.

The old man pulls the paper out of the typewriter making the cylinders

scream, puts his hand over the words, hums, and within a few minutes he is consulting three dozen very thick books, scrutinizing old notes, scribbles down signs, numbers, sketches and lines. Approaches the safe and tries with a combination of digits, but to no use. His eyes fall on the boy. They look at each other for a moment and then the old man continues.

Alright, where were we... yes... hmm...

"The creature was aghast by the sudden silence. It slapped the ship, as you would a broken radio, to make the sounds start again. It was rather a failure, and instead of singing there was screaming. Panic struck the passengers, but panic also struck the creature. To make the awful noise stop it grabbed the ship, with lovers, guests, servants, orchestra and all, and pulled it down in the depths.

You would think this would be the end of the lovely music, and that the creature certainly made itself a great disservice. But the thing is: all matter vibrates. During the festivities the entire ship had absorbed the entrancing harmonies, changed its frequency to that of the music, and as it sank the water amplified the sound and suddenly the creature was soaked in a symphony. And with that a thousand year old kingdom was submerged in oblivion.

Years passed and the creature dozed happily, embracing its ever vibrating bundle of music, vibrating alongside it, floating with the streams, not noticing how the temperature started dropping. The ice nibbled on the creature's extremities, slowing its bodily functions down until it unknowingly fell into deep hibernation, safely packed in thick ice. Now, instead of floating with the streams, it travelled north with the ice.

Eventually our earth turns warmer, and the creature with it. The ice melts and piece by piece it drops whatever it's been carrying. Pinecones, pebbles and creatures with ships are all left behind in lakes and gullies. Still in a peaceful numbness the creature feels the need for air and stargazing every now and then. With no fear and not aware of the risk of being seen it floats up to the surface humming along with its beloved ship, inhaling the fresh foggy air, smelling the pines, nodding to the raven. Still to this day people around here talk of gigantic vessels coming out of the fog, faint melodies and deep sighs.

Until one day, about 150 years ago, a deafening silence woke the creature from its sleep. The ship was gone, and instead of a vast vibrating ocean the

creature found itself in a narrow pond, hardly bigger than a puddle. There was great confusion in the creature's mind. Confusion and disappointment. How could it have lost its beloved ship? Where was it now? Was it stolen? Dizzy with grief and fury it rambles over the floor of the lake. A clutter of noises, sounds and signals besets its sensitive membranes and cause them to shiver rather than vibrate. The creature without its singing ship is homeless, alone in the world. And knowing that it has really only itself to blame for the loss makes it even worse.

Years of brooding, self-pity and longing follows for the creature down in the mire. It longs and listens and lures. Listens, tunes the waves, seeks the frequency of its lost ship, tries to set its own membranes into a familiar vibration. Now and then a recognizable signal reaches the creature, but it can't locate the source. It calls. At first desperate shrieks, after some time patient, constant, obsessive humming... not yet... soon... Searching for a resonance among the chaotic cluster of soundwaves rushing through the waters. It can wait. It has time. It has nowhere else to be... not yet... soon... “

The old man turns silent, stretches out his crooked back, gazes out the window, past the boy who until now has been breathlessly listening. He hasn't heard this story before. He asks the old man about the rocks he has just thrown into Laxsjön. Is the creature still down there, and in that case, was it hit by the rocks? Maybe they hit its head and now it's angry and want revenge?

The old man twitches as if he just woke up, pulls himself together and calms the boy saying that the water will slow the rocks down and if they would hit the creature it would hurt it no more than raindrops.

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and Annika Wahlström.



Image 30. Ymir at play.

